

Essay on Community Engagement

Assessment 1

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Introduction

Community engagement is everywhere around us. As a community, we interact between us on a daily basis. This interaction helps us to learn and improve ourselves every day, to grow as a species, to be on the top of the food chain as the only species with reason. Our community has the ability to communicate thoughts to others and can transmit knowledge from one generation to the next one. ¹

This essay aims to describe the purpose of the community engagement and the challenges that we have. We are going to discuss about the possibilities of engaging with stakeholders in a community engagement and their impact of it.

We are going to evaluate and understand the concept of the community engagement and look into some principles as well as standards, which will engage us with stakeholders in many different companies and organizations.

It is important for every person to know more about the community that he or she lives in. This is why, with this essay, I am going to explain more about the world that we live in and how the people are making the world a better place with the community engagement.

Community Engagement

What is Community Engagement?

Community engagement is a process of people or a group of people working together, who are connected between each other with same interest, geographically, to achieve a goal or a purpose. They can work collaboratively to address issues affecting the wellbeing of those people.

It is a very powerful tool for bringing about behavioral and environmental changes that will improve the members of the community and its health. It often involves coalitions and partnerships that help mobilize resources and influence systems, change relationships among partners; helps to make changes of policies and programs. (Principles of Community Engagement, CDC, 1997, p. 9).²

Community Engagement is also a process that can build powerful relationships between stakeholders and sharing new ideas with other parties.

We can also see the community engagement as a continuum of community involvement. Over time, the engagement in a certain group of people may evolve into long-term partnerships. This can be seen in big companies with a lot of suppliers, but not only. It can be also seen in individuals with common interest like political, economic and social.³

Benefits

As I already mentioned, community engagement is everywhere around us and is part of our lives. It brings many benefits to the society. A recent review of the literature on community engagement identified nine areas in which community engagement made a positive impact (Staley, 2009)⁴. Those are: Agenda, Design and delivery, Implementation and change, Ethics, The public involved in the project, Academic partners, Individual research participants, Community organizations and the General public.

I am going to focus more on the Academic partners, Design and delivery and the General public.

We, as students, actively participate in a Community engagement. We are engaged with the university that we are studying in, with the lecturers and with the colleagues. There are many reasons that show the benefits of our engagement as a community and as an Academic society. We all have a mission and common goals to achieve. From one side this is the process of learning and teaching. The lectures have to provide us the right information, so we can learn properly and graduate. From another side, we have to engage with each other, like when we do a common project or group assignment together. Every day we learn new things and engage as a community, either social or academic.

Academic partners are not just the teachers and student. These can be schools, universities, agencies etc, for example the partnership between recruiting agencies and Universities. That is a common community engagement, which benefits both sides – the graduated student benefits with direct career opportunity and the agency benefits from fulfilling the available place with a perfect candidate. Another example for Academic partners is between university and a hospital.

One more area of community engagement is Design and delivery. In this area we have positive impact in mainly businesses, either profitable organizations or non-profitable. Every business has suppliers. Every supplier works with a delivery company or it is a delivery company itself. We all know the big companies like Amazon, eBay or Apple, which make deliveries every day. Some of them have their own delivering company, but others use services like DHL or Royal Mail. The benefit in this kind of community engagement is mostly for reducing the expenses. That is why the companies with many deliveries on a daily basis have a contract with a delivery services instead of paying them commissions of every delivery.

Last, but not least, of the areas with active community engagement, that I am focusing on, is the General public.

The General public is participating in many community engagements every day. These can be related to religion, politics, protest of any kind, gathering public opinion about certain problem etc. Authentic public engagement is a collaborative form of problem-solving that creates conditions through which regular citizens can deliberate effectively on complex public problems. It invites the society to join the public dialogue surrounding a problem and provides them the tools to do so productively. As a result, leaders know where the public stands as problem-solving progresses, while citizens themselves contribute to solutions through their input, ideas and actions. ⁵

The General public can be divided in separate groups. These smaller groups can be the drivers, the cyclists, the students, the patients, the gardeners and a million more. All of them are part of the public and if some of those groups have a certain problem, they can easily solve it by working together. For example if there are not enough bicycle lanes in a certain area, the community will engage and make a complaints about it, which will reflect of developing more bicycle areas in that neighborhood.

Challenges

With the many opportunities that the Community engagement can provide, the challenges follow them.

Maintaining the Community engagement is one of the challenges that gets in our way. It is very hard to keep many people interested in a certain goal or to re-direct their attention to something new and different. Most of the people or groups of people that are engaged in a project, a company or a business stick to their interests and follow one path. As a matter of fact, that is what the stakeholders, for which I am going to talk more later on, will do. But sometimes it is hard to take this people with the common interests and make them work together on new or similar project/goal. To accomplish this, many employers have to give different kind of bonuses or to increase the salary, so they can stimulate the employees.

Overcoming the competition is another challenge in the Community engagement. Let's say we have great product to sell, but we cannot patent it, we are too small to sell it worldwide and we have to sell it only in our country. Our competition finds out about the product, recreate it and sell it in a bigger country. This is a very big challenge to overcome in the Community engagement, which is also a geographic challenge. The community involved with this product is very large – from the manufacturer to the direct consumer.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders are individuals or a group of people with the same interests that can affect or be affected by the actions of a business. We can divide them in 2 groups – internal stakeholders and external stakeholders.

Internal stakeholders are employees, owners, board of directors, managers – sales manager, general manager, workers etc.

External stakeholders are customers, suppliers, creditors, intermediaries, competitors, society, government etc.

Some of the challenges that impact the engaging with stakeholders are:

1. Multiple priorities, limited time and not enough opportunities

It is common that the stakeholders have limited time, but they can work more effective if you give them relevant project, which is close to them and a defined purpose.

2. With time people change – both project team members and stakeholders

Here is important to communicate with the stakeholders, so we can know they are “up to date”.

3. A lot of effort for a small project

Sometimes is good to engage the relevant team to do the certain job.

4. Virtual world engagement

In 21st century we have many technologies that we can stay connected to each other. Sometimes the communication is harder, when it is not face to face. All we have to do is find a way to adapt.

5. Finding shared interests

The people who are identified as a stakeholders, are supposed to be with the common interest and goals. If there is someone in the team who does not look enthusiastic about the project, we should consider exchanging them. ⁶

Conclusion

Community engagement is a powerful and important process of achieving a goal by working together. It ensures empowerment and it is critical to community well being. The power of community working together leads to more opportunities for the people, it ensures that society have access to multiple valued social activities and contribute to developing them.

Community engagement is important as it takes action to influence stakeholders with government, political or funding power to implement public projects and policies that primarily benefit individual communities and drive social change. ⁷

The members of the community can engage with each other effectively by many ways. They can schedule more meeting in person or using the newest technologies and contacting each other via different platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and others. Also common thing of communication are forums. We can say that the social media platforms have become the main, also the cheapest way to communicate with each other.

There are many successful implementations of the community engagement out there. One of the biggest one is the healthcare. This sector is very important to the

humanity and with the right community engagement and researches it will continue improving.

Community engagement can be seen many different areas. All of them have one thing in common and that is communication. People can actively communicate, work together to make the world a better place.

References

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